

BEHAVIOR OF CHICKADEES.—On May 27, 1925, I caught and banded a Chickadee in my canary-cage trap. He did not seem frightened and I watched the trap closely for his return. The next day he came back, and every day for at least a week. One day I was surprised to see him come, and this time accompanied by his family of three little ones (I never saw the mother). He directed the little ones and had them in a row on the ledge outside of the cage; then he hopped in and proceeded to feed the babies through the bars of the cage. One little fellow slipped around the cage and jumped up in the door, but the father saw him and flew to the door and pecked the baby and made them all stay out of the trap. He returned for four days, and each day the same performance took place; but never once could I catch one of the little ones and of course I did not try to trap the father again.

Each year he comes back for I can see the band through my binoculars, but I have been unable to catch him again.—MRS. M. L. COUTANT, *Danville, Illinois*.

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AN ALBINO PURPLE MARTIN.—A white Purple Martin was born, raised, and went on his migration from one of our martin houses. I tried my best to trap him but, on the two occasions when he entered the house, he "gave me the slip." I hope he will return next year. This bird was also seen among the martins at DeTour. Of the forty Purple Finches banded in 1926, nineteen returned in 1927.—GEO. W. LUTHER, *DeTour, Michigan*.

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CATBIRDS REMAIN MATED.—Catbirds, Nos. 146857 and 146858, which were banded as a mated pair on June 6, 1926, and July 11, 1926, were retrapped, still mated, at their nest within five feet of both 1926 nests on June 24, 1927, at Riverside Park.—S. E. PERKINS III, *Indianapolis, Indiana*.

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#### NOTES

In the Massachusetts Items of Interest, February 1, 1928, Mr. Forbush writes: "We hope that bird banders will take pains to record the colors of the bill, eyes, legs, and feet of the birds that they band. There is so much confusion in various publications regarding the colors of these parts of small birds, as well as large birds, that a systematic effort should be made to record the colors from *the living birds in the hand*. Many notes on the colors of the bills and feet of birds have been taken from dried skins in which the colors are often quite different from those of the living bird.

"These colors change more or less according to age and season. In recording them it is well to state whether the bird is an adult or young, and to give the *date* of the record."

The Inland Bird Banding Association will appreciate any efforts to carry out Mr. Forbush's suggestions.

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#### COMMUNICATIONS

Editor, WILSON BULLETIN: Mrs. Taylor's paper on Alexander Wilson, appearing in the June (1928) issue of the BULLETIN, contains what I believe to be an erroneous statement which, though of minor consequence, should, to guard against repetition, be spoken of. Mrs. Taylor says of the American Ornithology that "Volume I contains two plates colored by Wilson's own hand."

It is indeed true that by his own hand Wilson etched two plates which eventually became plates 1 and 2 of his published work; and it is true that when he had etched the plates he took prints, colored them, and sent them to his friend William Bartram. He did this in the first enthusiasm of the idea of his great work. But at once he perceived that zeal alone was not enough: he saw that professional aid was necessary, and he had no money with which to buy professional aid: and so he laid the matter aside.

A few months later the publisher, William Bradbury, undertook to finance the project, and that changed the situation. Alexander Lawson, a master engraver, was employed: Wilson's two plates were brought out: Lawson took them in hand, retouched them, and put them in the condition in which they at length were used in the published work.

Wilson meanwhile, with zeal rekindled, devoted his spare hours to collecting, to writing, and to the soliciting of subscriptions. Eventually four hundred and forty subscribers were enrolled.

The production of a book of the size intended (nine volumes, small folio, with eighty plates, more or less) and in an edition of upwards of five hundred copies necessitated a staff of trained workmen. In that day the hand coloring of engravings was a common practice, and shops of colorists were maintained by publishers. Miss Lawson alludes<sup>1</sup> to the fact that Wilson eventually employed Alexander Riter in that capacity. The data in the light of which Mrs. Taylor's statement should be revised are contained in a letter which on the 22nd of May, 1807, Wilson wrote to William Bartram. The important passages are as follows:

"By the impressions of my two first plates that accompany this you will see that I have a request to make to Miss Bartram if the state of her health will permit. We want well coloured specimens of the plates to be sent to Boston, Charleston, New York, &c., and as my time will not permit me to do them myself I have presumed to apply to her to colour the impressions that are sent with this according to the specimens that accompany them, for which I shall make any return. Perhaps Mary Leech might be set to some parts of them with safety which would lessen the drudgery. . . .

"In washing the blue Jay the most difficult part of the process is to lay on the colour without being streaked (which you will see I have not succeeded in) and in giving the true tint which I think is nearly approached in the specimen. Nothing but a wash is necessary as the engraving must be seen thro the colour.

"But you know the whole affair ten times better than I can pretend to and as I shall be engaged in Drawing on Sunday I beg you would drop me a line tomorrow by Mr. Leech. . . .

"P. S. The yellow bird has been coloured with a too dull yellow and the *breast* of the hanging bird may be more of a vermillion."<sup>2</sup>

Wilson did color a few prints of his first two plates: but it is quite plain that he did not color the several hundred prints of them which were involved in publication.

*Sewickley, Pa.*

BAYARD H. CHRISTY.

<sup>1</sup>"Miss Lawson's recollections of ornithologists." By Frank L. Burns. *Auk*, XXXIV, No. 3, July, 1917, pp. 275-282 (p. 279).

<sup>2</sup>"Some unpublished letters of Alexander Wilson and John Abbott." By Witmer Stone. *Auk*, XXIII, No. 4, October, 1906, pp. 361-368.